

IN EL DORADO COUNTY

By Ida Wright Hanson

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Hermione jerked her fish pole impatiently.

"I'm sure it's better fishing over in El Dorado county," she said plaintively.

"There was once a man," I answered, "who stood at the fork of a sandy,ony country road, not knowing whether he should turn to the left, or to straight ahead. As he hesitated, a farmer came along and the man said, 'Which road leads to San Fernando?' And the farmer answered, 'Both.' And the man said, 'Which one shall I take, then?' And the farmer answered, 'No matter; whichever one you take, you will wish you had taken the other.'

"I suppose you mean that, if we were in El Dorado county I should think it would be better fishing here in Placer county?" ventured Hermione.

"Possibly I do," I said, continuing my scribbling, though doggedly, for I was not in story writing mood. Presently I chanced to look down just as Hermione looked up. Something there was in her limp eyes, her rose flushed mouth, even the dash of color in her smooth cheek, which made me above my notebook hastily into my pocket. I told myself it was her resemblance to her sister May.

She was in Paris selecting her trousseau. When she returned, to some indefinite time—she really seemed to be in no more haste to get back than I was to have her come—we were to be married. We were not sentimentalists, but were looking forward to a successful comradeship undisturbed by disquieting elements of love. A working union in which she would illustrate what her husband wrote. We had been engaged for three years without a quarrel. This, we argued, boded well for a pleasant future. Still there was no hurry.

But lately something had entered into my placid life which was setting me all awry. The mischievous it was, too, that the disturbance was not tangible. If it had been a debt, I could have repaid it; if a talon rejected, I could have revised it or laid it upon the flames; if poor health had been the disquieting cause, I could have sought a remedy, but it was none of these. It was an omnipresent ghost which walked with me, unseen, unheard. I had a faint idea of its birth. On the day of May's departure for Europe we had been discussing Hermione.

"She must live with us," I said.

"Oh, yes," answered May, "until she is married. I fancy she will marry young. She is going to make a very attractive woman."

Before that day I had been a contented man; since that day I lived in a misty world except when I resolutely forgot my absurd, unreasonable feeling.

"Come on, chicken," I called gayly to Hermione, "we'll go into El Dorado county."

Over the rocks we clambered, laughing—it is so easy for a child to be happy and for a grownup child to catch the spirit if he will—over the rocks, across the suspension bridge spanning the American river, and we had gone from Placer county into El Dorado.

"There! This is lots nicer," she said when we were again seated to her satisfaction.

How sweet her voice was, and really the child was going to be handsomer than her sister, though May was considered a beauty. Hermione was changed lately, somehow. Ah, it must be her hair, which used to hang down her back in a frowsy braid. Today—why—a golden coronal, clef here and there with a turquoise bine studded comb and topped off with a black bow. Why—

"What are you staring at me so for?" she asked, putting on her hat and blushing.

Fancy Hermione blushing!

"There was once a man," I answered hypocritically, "who was a—well, Cicero, for example, who was at work on a difficult mental problem, and at the time he was gazing hard at the family cat, for example, but he had no conception of the cat."

Hermione pouted. "If you call yourself Cicero, you might be a little more complimentary to me."

I laughed. Hermione always laughed so if she had the faintest reason, so in a moment her dimples were in sight again. Strange I had never before noticed what a wealth of them there was.

"How old are you, child?" I asked suddenly.

"Eighteen," she answered, pulling her fish hook gently away from a snag.

I mused over her answer, the tangle in my head trying hard to straighten itself. May was thirty-one—my own age—though she didn't look it. Eighteen—ah!

"If the trouble is in your story," suggested Hermione, "maybe I can help you." Her hazel eyes looked intently into mine. May's eyes were blue.

"If only you might!" I groaned, but I wasn't thinking of the half dashed tale in my notebook. Suddenly all things had become plain to me. The ghost was laid, but what profit was it to me to gain understanding when it came three years too late?

"Well, who are the characters?" she asked precisely.

"A queen of beauty and wisdom and one little maid. It has three chapters. The first deals with a colossal mistake, the second with a fool's lethargy and

the third with an awakening which came too late."

"Oh, not too late!" protested Hermione. "You really must change that. It ought to end well."

"Some stories can't end well, little girl," I answered with conviction.

"We'll make it end well," she continued decidedly. "And the king?"

"The king?"

"Yes; it's a queen, doesn't it have to have a king too?"

"This story hasn't. There's no king—only the king's fool," I answered bitterly.

"Is the king's fool in love with the queen?" Hermione's eyes followed the gentle eddying of her fish line.

"He—that's the approved predication, I suppose."

"And the little maid loves the fool," she supplemented, "but he doesn't know it. By and by something happens."

Just then something did happen. Hermione's pole went frolicking down the river, and like lightning out of a clear sky Hermione, joyous hearted Hermione, was sobbing tempestuously. In my moment of astonishment I took her into my arms. Shouldn't one comfort one's golden-haired little sister? I opined that one should.

"There! There, little girl!" I shouted. "What is it?"

"Oh, it's May! How could she treat you so, and you so good and kind, and—and—oh, it will break your loving heart! It will make you an outcast fugitive from justice!"

I smiled at her extravagance of expression; but, no matter what was the calamity, I was in no hurry to give up the warm little bundle in my arms. This was a new sensation, and altogether delightful, but quite too soon she drew herself gently away and began the explanation.

She had just received a letter from May. May had met a man in Paris, one "so dear and so handsome." Hermione quoted her sister's words with ineffable scorn—he "came of good family, he was rich, and, and, and—

Was ever sweet deliverance so opposite?

"Hermione," I said joyfully, lifting her tearful little face up to mine. "Hermione, you said the little maid loved the fool?"

"But that was in the story." She was blushing again.

"And so is this," I declared, bending my head.

There was once a man.

I observed contentedly, as we loitered along the homeward way, "who believed that somewhere between the Amazon and Orinoco rivers lay a land marvelously rich in gold and precious gems. He called this fabulous country El Dorado; but he never found it. I am more fortunate than Sir Walter Raleigh. I have found my El Dorado, a 'golden region,' indeed, little girl."

And Hermione, smuggling her small hand into mine, asked naively:

"Then it was better fishing over in El Dorado county, wasn't it?"

Kind Words.

At the breath of the dew on the tender plant, they gently fall upon the drooping heart, refreshing its withered tendrils and soothing its burning woes. Bright oases, they are in life's great desert. Who can estimate the pangs they have alleviated or the good works they have accomplished? Long after they are uttered do they reverberate in the soul's inner chambers and sing low, sweet, liquid strains that quell all the raging storms that may have before existed. And, oh, when the heart is sad and, like a broken harp, the sweetest chords of pleasure cease to vibrate, who can tell the power of one kind word? One little word of tenderness gushing in upon the soul will sweep the long neglected chords and awaken the most pleasant strains. Kind words are like jewels in the heart, never to be forgotten, but perhaps to cheer up their memory a long, sad life, while words of cruelty are like darts in the bosom, wounding and leaving scars that will be borne to the grave by their victims.—Saturday Evening Post.

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NOTICE.

The following position has been received by the Town Council of the Town of Bloomfield:

BLOOMFIELD, N. J., March 19, 1906.

TO THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLOOMFIELD,

IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX:

The undersigned subscribers, owners of one-half of the lands fronting on the heremaster described in the map of the town of Bloomfield within the Town of Bloomfield in the County of Essex, do hereby respectfully petition your honored Council to consider the proposed stone sidewalk on the northeasterly side of Bloomfield avenue. The improvement desired set forth accurately is as follows:

Beginning at the northeasterly side of Bloomfield avenue at the intersection of the same with the northeasterly side of Broad street, and ending at the intersection of the same with the northeasterly side of Bloomfield avenue about 430 feet to the northeasterly side of the right of way of the Watchung Railroad, and ending there.

Mary Harvey, 50 feet

Mary E. Kough, 103 3/4 feet

A. W. Plauch, 65 feet

J. T. Pierson, 372 feet

Arthur & Stanford, 25 feet

J. T. Pierson, 25 feet

George C. Adams, 184 feet

George Battle, 30 feet

Wm. H. Stevenson, 50 feet

James E. Hampson, 50 feet

C. Swanson, 50 feet

Tricelal Estate, 100 feet

Lillian E. Kough, 147 feet

Charles F. Kocher, 81 feet

William Hauser, 81 feet

W. M. Johnson, Town Clerk.

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